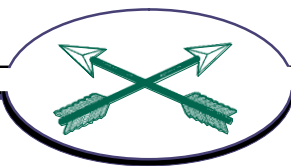


THINKING ABOUT



# SPECIAL FORCES

"THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS"

*Answers to Often-Asked Questions*

---

*This booklet is primarily designed to help you make an informed decision about applying for Special Forces (SF). We encourage you to consider this information carefully and to talk with soldiers and families who are in SF to discuss any unanswered questions. Good luck in your decision!*

---



## **This Booklet Is Designed to Help You . . .**

### **MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION**

#### ***About a Possible Future in SF***

This may be the most important decision in your Army career. We encourage you to use this booklet as one source of information and to seek and find as much information as you need to make the decision that is right for you.

### **PREPARE FOR SF**

If you already plan to make a career in SF, this booklet will help you mentally prepare. Knowing what to expect improves your ability to deal with the selection and qualification process and the challenges of being a “quiet professional”—an SF soldier.

## **This Booklet Is Intended For . . .**

### **SOLDIERS**

We’ve addressed the most common questions soldiers much like yourself have asked about selection and training, military occupational specialties (MOSs), SF Groups, and day-to-day life in SF.

### **WIVES**

In many cases, the soldier’s family plays a key role in his decision process and in his ultimate adjustment and success in SF. So, we’ve included information about family-related concerns.



---

ADVICE FROM  
**SF SOLDIERS**

---

*“Go for it, if you think  
you’ve got it. SF is the  
best place to be.”*

---

## Contents

	Page
What Is SF? .....	4
How Are SF Different from Conventional Army Forces? .....	5
How You Qualify .....	8
What You Can Expect After You’re Qualified .....	16
The Long-Term View of Your SF Career .....	19
Families in SF .....	21
Contacts for More Information .....	23

# What Is SF?

SF, commonly referred to as Green Berets, are strategic, multipurpose forces capable of rapid response to various contingencies throughout the world. Their mission is to organize, train, equip, and direct indigenous forces in unconventional warfare and foreign internal defense. For this reason, they possess foreign language and area orientation skills. Most SF soldiers work on a 12-man Operational Detachment “A” (SFODA) team, sometimes called an A Team. The team is organized as in the illustration shown below.



# How Are SF Different from Conventional Army Forces?



## Regional Orientation

Each SF soldier is assigned to one of five SF Groups. Each Group is responsible for several missions in a designated area of the world, or area of operations (AO). The SF soldier closely studies his Group's AO and trains to the unique demands of this area of the world.

## Intercultural Communication

The SF soldier learns a foreign language and works closely with the indigenous people in his Group's AO. Unlike the conventional soldier, the SF soldier is often called upon to interact closely with, and live under the same conditions as, people of a foreign culture. Not only does he perform his job expertly, he also serves as a representative of the United States (U.S.).

## Missions and Collateral Activities

Soldiers in general purpose units train for conventional warfare; in contrast, SF soldiers are called upon to accomplish a wide variety of unconventional missions. The SF soldier serves in the roles of teacher and helper, as well as warrior.

SF plan, conduct, and support special operations in all operational environments. The U.S. Army organizes, trains, equips, and provides SF to perform seven primary missions: unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, direct action, special reconnaissance, counterproliferation, information warfare/command and control warfare, and counterterrorism. (Counterterrorism is a primary mission only for designated and specially organized, trained, and equipped units.) In addition to the seven primary missions, SF may participate in any of several collateral activities: security assistance, humanitarian assistance, coalition liaison, counterdrug activities, personnel recovery, and countermine activities.

### ***Missions***

*Unconventional warfare* is a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominately conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external force. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive and low-visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence collection, and evasion.

*Foreign internal defense* is the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The primary SF mission in this interagency activity is to organize, train, advise, and assist host nation military and paramilitary forces.

*Direct action* operations are short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions by special operations forces to seize, destroy, or inflict damage on a specified target or to destroy, capture, or recover designated personnel or materiel.

*Special reconnaissance* is reconnaissance and surveillance conducted by SF to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy. SF may also use hydrographic or geographic characteristics of a particular area. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and poststrike reconnaissance.

*Counterproliferation* is action taken to locate, identify, seize, destroy, render safe, transport, capture, or recover weapons of mass destruction.

*Information warfare/command and control warfare* are actions taken to achieve information superiority in support of national military strategy by affecting adversary information or information systems while leveraging and protecting U.S. information and information systems.

*Counterterrorism* includes offensive measures taken by civilian and military agencies of a government to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism. The primary mission of SF in this interagency activity is to apply specialized capabilities to preclude, preempt, and resolve terrorist incidents abroad.

### ***Collateral Activities***

*Security assistance* is a group of programs authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act, the Arms Export Control Act, or other related U.S. statutes. The primary SF role is to provide mobile training teams and other training assistance. Public law prohibits personnel providing security assistance from performing combat duties.

*Humanitarian assistance* is any military act or operation of a humanitarian nature, including disaster relief, noncombatant evacuation operations, and support to, and/or resettlement of, displaced civilians.

*Coalition liaison* and other security activities ensure the physical security of important persons, facilities, and events.

*Counterdrug activities* are measures taken to disrupt, interdict, and destroy illicit drug activities.

*Personnel recovery* includes activities designed to locate, recover, and restore to friendly control selected persons or materiel that are isolated and threatened in sensitive, denied, or contested areas.

*Countermining activities* attempt to reduce or eliminate the threat to noncombatants and friendly military forces posed by mines, booby traps, and other explosive devices.

## **Degree of Expertise and Responsibility**

Each member of an SFODA is a self-sufficient expert in his branch or MOS and is capable of directly applying his skills or instructing others in his specialty. His specialized training and expertise prepare him for levels of responsibility that are higher than what he would normally experience in the conventional Army. He is expected to exercise more initiative, self-reliance, maturity, and resourcefulness than his conventional counterpart.

### ***Sense of Community***

Team members work closely together and rely on each other for long periods of time, both during deployments and in garrison, developing close interpersonal



ADVICE FROM  
SF SOLDIERS

---

*“You must know your  
SF MOS inside and out.”*

---

ties, team cohesion, and esprit de corps. The sense of community and support among soldiers and their families is generally considered higher in SF than in the Army as a whole.

### **Rewards**

Rewards for a job well done are not motivators in SF. SF is strong in terms of intangible rewards: job satisfaction, training opportunities, professionalism, responsibility, and feelings of camaraderie and belonging.

### **Common Myths About SF**

A common misconception about SF is that the work is glamorous and filled with the adventure and excitement of exotic travel and direct action missions. In reality, the SF soldier spends a great deal of time preparing for missions and training exercises. He studies to maintain his MOS and language skills and analyzes his Group's AO. When he does deploy, he may find himself living in conditions that most Americans would consider austere at best. The work is physically and mentally demanding and frequently extends for long periods of time.

### **Characteristics of the Successful SF Soldier**

Although there is prestige in wearing the Green Beret, SF soldiers are not boastful or arrogant. They are more accurately described as "quiet professionals."

---

## **S U C C E S S F U L   S F   S O L D I E R S T E N D   T O   B E**

INDEPENDENT
FLEXIBLE
GOAL-ORIENTED
RESOURCEFUL
SELF-CONFIDENT
TEAM PLAYERS
GOOD TRAINERS

HIGH IN INITIATIVE
COMPLETELY TRUSTWORTHY
SUPERIOR IN TECHNICAL SKILLS
SKILLFUL IN DEALING WITH PEOPLE
OPEN TO DIFFERENT CULTURES
STRONGLY COMMITTED TO SF
SERVICE-ORIENTED



# How You Qualify

The road to SF starts with the Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) Program. If selected, you then receive qualification training in the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). Upon graduation from the SFQC, if you are not already foreign language qualified, you will receive foreign language training. Then, you begin your first assignment with an SF Group, usually on an SFODA. The diagram on page 9 shows the typical sequence of events. The acronyms listed below are depicted on the diagram.

---

SERE is the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape Course

---

SOCM is the Special Operations Combat Medic Course

---

SFMS is the Special Forces Medical Sergeant Course

---

AIMC is Advanced International Morse Code training

---

## SFAS

SFAS is a 3-week program run by the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. After completing the application procedures and receiving a date to attend SFAS (usually through the assistance of an SF recruiter), the soldier reports to Fort Bragg on temporary duty (TDY) status.

The purpose of SFAS is to identify soldiers who have the potential for SF training. The program has two phases. The first phase assesses physical fitness, motivation, and ability to cope with stress. Activities in this phase include psychological tests; physical fitness and swim tests; runs, obstacle courses, and ruckmarches; and military orienteering exercises. An evaluation board meets after the first phase to determine which candidates will be allowed to continue in the program. The second phase assesses leadership and teamwork skills. At the end, another board meets to select those soldiers who may attend the SFQC.

Most candidates find SFAS to be physically demanding. During in-processing, candidates must score a minimum of 206 on the Army Physical Fitness Test for the 17- to 21-year-old age group, and they must swim 50 meters while dressed in boots and fatigues. All assessment activities require the soldier to be well prepared physically. Ruckmarching and foot care are especially important to any soldier's preparation. Suggested physical training programs are available for soldiers through their SF recruiter.

## Assignment to an MOS

At the time of SFAS graduation, soldiers learn their MOS assignment and their training course start date. The SF MOSs are —

---

18B (weapons sergeant)

---

18C (engineer sergeant)

---

18D (medical sergeant)

---

18E (communications sergeant)

---



ADVICE FROM  
SF SOLDIERS

---

*“The first thing to go is your feet. There’s only one way to make it through—you must train with a rucksack.”*

---

# THE ROAD TO SF

## DETACHMENT COMMANDER

18A

SFQC  
24 WEEKS

LANGUAGE TRAINING  
17-23 WEEKS

SERE\*  
3 WEEKS

INFANTRY OFFICER  
ADVANCED COURSE\*

18A

## WEAPONS SERGEANT

18B

SFQC  
24 WEEKS

LANGUAGE TRAINING  
17-23 WEEKS

18B

## ENGINEER SERGEANT

18C

SFQC  
24 WEEKS

LANGUAGE TRAINING  
17-23 WEEKS

18C

## MEDICAL SERGEANT

18D

SFQC  
3 WEEKS

SOCM  
24 WEEKS

SFMS  
20 WEEKS

SFQC  
5 WEEKS

LANGUAGE TRAINING  
17-23 WEEKS

18D

## COMMUNICATIONS SERGEANT

18E

AIMC  
8 WEEKS

SFQC  
24 WEEKS

LANGUAGE TRAINING  
17-23 WEEKS

18E

\* If not already attended

SFAS  
24 DAYS

I II III

SFQC PHASE

Soldiers have two opportunities to indicate any preference for a particular MOS:

- Soldiers can indicate an MOS preference on their SFAS application. Recruiters keep this information in their database.
- In the early part of SFAS, candidates have an opportunity to learn more about the various SF MOSs through presentations or films. At this time, candidates have a chance to submit their written MOS preferences in rank order.

## MORE ABOUT

## THE SFAS

Fewer than 50% of the soldiers who start the SFAS program are selected for training.

The program is voluntary, and soldiers may withdraw at any time after day six.

Physical preparation is crucial.

Remember to bring boots that are well broken in—not new.

The MOS assignment board has access to both preference statements but gives more weight to the more recent (the more informed) preference.

## About MOS Assignment

The assignment decision is based on—

- Your previous MOS and training.
- Your aptitude scores.
- The needs of the force.
- Your preference.

Most soldiers get their preferred MOS when the preference and the aptitudes match. However, there are no guarantees.

All MOSs are infantry-oriented (including medics) and **everyone** cross-trains.

## Definitions of SF MOSs

**18A.** The detachment commander is an 18A captain. He commands the detachment and is responsible for everything that the detachment does or fails to do. The commander may command and/or advise an indigenous battalion combat force.

**18B.** Weapons sergeants are familiar with weapons systems found throughout the world. They gain extensive knowledge about every type of small arms and indirect fire weapons (mortars). They learn the capabilities and characteristics of U.S. and foreign air defense and antitank systems, as well as how to teach marksmanship and employment of weapons to others. Weapons sergeants employ conventional and unconventional tactics and techniques as tactical mission leaders. They assist the operations sergeant in the preparation of the operations and training portions of area studies, briefbacks, and operation plans and orders. They recruit, organize, train, and advise or command combat indigenous forces up to company size.

## O F F I C E R



## W E A P O N S



## E N G I N E E R



## M E D I C A L



## C O M M O



*18C.* Engineer sergeants are experts in the planning and constructing of buildings and bridges, as well as in their demolition. Construction requires learning to read blueprints and to construct a theater-of-operations building and field fortifications. Demolition requires learning about land mine warfare, non-electric and electric firing systems, and how to improvise with substitutes for standard ammunition and explosives. Engineer sergeants plan, supervise, lead, perform, and instruct all aspects of combat engineering and light construction engineering. Engineer sergeants construct and employ improvised munitions, plan and perform sabotage operations, and prepare the operation plans and orders. They can recruit, organize, train, and advise or command indigenous combat forces up to company size.

*18D.* Medical sergeants are specialists in many different areas of human and animal physiology. Medical sergeants specialize in trauma management, infectious diseases, cardiac life support, and surgical procedures and learn the basics of veterinary medicine. Both general health care and emergency health care are stressed in training. Medical sergeants provide emergency, routine, and long-term medical care for detachment members and associated allied members and host nation personnel. They train, advise, and direct detachment routine, emergency, and preventive medical care. They establish field medical facilities to support detachment operations. They provide veterinary care. They prepare the medical portion of area studies, briefbacks, and operation plans and orders. They can train, advise, or lead indigenous combat forces up to company size.

*18E.* Communications sergeants are experts in sending and receiving the critical messages linking the SFODAs with their command and control elements. Training entails extensive use of the Morse code system, cryptographic systems, burst outstation systems, and common radios found throughout the Army. They become familiar with antenna theory and radio wave propagation and how to teach it to others. Communications sergeants install, operate, and maintain FM, AM, HF, VHF, UHF, and SHF communications in voice, continuous wave, and burst radio nets. They advise the detachment commander on communications matters. They train the detachment members and indigenous forces in communications.

They prepare the communications portion of area studies, briefbacks, and operation plans and orders. They can train, advise, or lead indigenous combat forces up to company size.

### SFQC

After a soldier is selected from SFAS, he returns to his unit and awaits his slot in the SFQC. There is often a several-month waiting period before the soldier begins the course. Soldiers selected for MOS 18B (weapons) or MOS 18C (engineer) go directly to the 24-week course at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Soldiers selected for MOS 18E (communications) first complete an additional course before attending the SFQC.

### MOS 18D: Medical Training

Soldiers selected to attend the SFMS Course (MOS 18D) attend the course for a period of 44 weeks at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The medical training is divided into two portions: first, the SOCM Course, which is 24 weeks long; second, the SFMS Course, which is 20 weeks long. Normally, 18Ds attend Phase I (3 weeks) prior to the SOCM course and Phase III (5 weeks) after the SFMS course.

---

## MORE ABOUT

## THE SFQC

---

The 5-day in-processing period allows you to get settled (and get your family settled) before training begins. During this time, wives receive a briefing and the company introduces them to the family support group.

You will be Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course (BNCOC)-qualified when you come out of the SFQC.

During the first 2 weeks you will have some free time, but you will often work on the weekends.

MOS training is geared specifically toward your MOS. Most weekends are free.

Phases I and III of SFQC take place at Camp MacKall, which is about an hour's drive from Fort Bragg. During this training, you will be in the field 7 days a week. Phase training culminates with a field training exercise where you will perform as part of an SFODA to accomplish an unconventional warfare mission.

Generally, the SFQC requires a great deal of study time. It is helpful to practice land navigation skills prior to arriving for the course.

Because of the length of the course, time in the field, and the PCS move, this period is often a stressful time for families.

A wives' orientation day is held to keep them informed about their husbands' training activities.

You will get at least 1 week of leave between SFQC graduation and the start of language training.

---

The 24-week SOCM Course covers anatomy and physiology, pharmacology, and advance trauma training. Along with this training, soldiers will complete the Emergency Medical Technician Paramedic (EMT-P) Course and will take the National Registry Examination for an opportunity to obtain the registry's EMT-P qualification.

The 20-week SFMS Course covers dental, surgical, anesthesia, veterinary, laboratory, and X-ray subjects.

The medical course is academically intensive and time intensive; 4 to 5 hours per night of studying and research are not uncommon. After the 44 weeks of medical training, soldiers then proceed to Phase III of the SFQC.

### MOS 18E: Morse Code Training

Soldiers in MOS 18E (communications sergeant) complete the 8-week AIMC at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This training covers radio telegraph procedures, military block printing, and practical exercises sending and receiving Morse code at various speeds.

### All MOSs: The 24-Week Course

All soldiers complete the 24-week SFQC at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Once soldiers receive their SFQC date, they are permanently assigned to Fort Bragg.

### SF Branch 18A

All officers, upon completion of the SFQC, will be rebranched to the SF Branch (18A). The SERE Level C Course must be satisfactorily completed before or immediately after the SFQC. SERE is a requirement for branch qualification. Officers



ADVICE FROM  
SF SOLDIERS

---

*“Research what you are getting into. Learn as much about your job as you possibly can, and do your best.”*

---

will ordinarily complete the Infantry Officer Advanced Course (IOAC) prior to SFQC. If not, they will proceed to IOAC following SF qualification.

## Assignment to an SF Group

There are five Active Component SF Groups. The chart on pages 14–15 identifies each Group's AO. The chart on page 16 describes each Group's duty station.

During the in-processing phase of the SFQC, students will have an opportunity to fill out a Group preference form, stating their first three choices for SF Group assignment. Personnel at the USAJFKSWCS and at the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command are responsible for making the assignments. Their decisions are based on the —

- Needs of the Groups.
- Soldier's existing language skills or regional orientation.
- Soldier's language aptitude (Defense Language Aptitude Battery score).
- Soldier's preference.

Group assignments are made first, then language assignments. Students will find out both their Group assignment and their foreign language assignment toward the end of the SFQC.

---

### MORE ABOUT

## SF GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

Your preference is given considerable weight when Group decisions are made. A majority of soldiers get their first or second choice. However, there are no guarantees.

If you want a certain Group, you can increase your chances by showing proficiency in a language associated with that Group.

It is difficult to change Groups once you are culturally oriented. Most soldiers stay with one Group throughout their SF careers.

---

## Foreign Language Training

Everyone who does not already hold a language rating prior to attending SFQC will attend language training upon graduation. For almost everyone, the language training location is Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Language training ranges from 17 to 23 weeks, depending on the difficulty of the language. The standards for graduation are 0+, 0+ on the Defense Language Proficiency Test (speaking and listening). About 95 percent of students are successful the first time through. Recycling is usually permitted. If a 0+, 0+ is not attained, your SF tab will be revoked.

The training emphasizes basic communication skills for soldiers who will be conducting military training. The focus is on speaking and listening skills, and military terminology is emphasized. Students can expect about 6 to 7 hours of classroom instruction per day plus homework, part of which may be computer-based instruction.

After completing language training, all soldiers are authorized 30 days to PCS to their new SF Group assignments. This 30-day PCS authorization applies even to soldiers stationed in 3d and 7th Groups at Fort Bragg.

---

## MORE ABOUT EACH GROUP'S AO

---

### 1st Group: East Asia/Pacific

1st Group's AO covers all countries in the Far East, including Thailand, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Tagoli, Indonesia, and the Philippines, to name a few. The climate and topography in these countries range from extreme heat and humidity and jungle areas (for example, in Thailand) to extreme cold and mountainous regions (for example, in Korea). While Asia is economically the fastest growing region of the world, most of its rural areas are still quite primitive. Generally speaking, the culture differs dramatically in some respects from our Western culture. While Americans like clear decisions, outgoing personalities, and clear-cut personal victories, Asians value compromise, harmony, respect for each person's "place" or status, and less overt expressions of opinions. The primary religions include Taoism and Buddhism, but Islam and Hinduism are also prevalent in some areas.

---

### 3d Group: Sub-Saharan Africa

3d Group's AO covers all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Zaire, Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa, to name a few. The climate and topography in many of these countries are characterized by extreme heat and desert areas, with some heavy rainy seasons. In eastern and central Africa, the rainy season is the main seasonal change. However, southern Africa has a relatively mild winter that extends from June to September. Living conditions throughout much of southern Africa are bleak, because Africa contains many of the world's poorest countries. Disease and starvation are widespread, and there is no government money to help the unemployed, sick, or old. Begging is a common practice, and giving to beggars is an important value for Muslims. Roughly half of all Africans are Muslim. However, each of the many ethnic groups in Africa has its own religion, so there are literally hundreds of traditional religions in Africa. The main languages spoken are English, French, Portuguese, Arabic, and Swahili, although there are other languages widely spoken.

### 5th Group: Southwest Asia/Northeast Africa

5th Group's AO covers countries in the Middle East, including Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Kuwait, to name a few. The climate and topography in these countries range from extreme heat and desert areas (for example, in Saudi Arabia) to extreme cold and mountainous areas (for example, in the mountains of Pakistan). Living conditions are primitive in many areas, although many countries have enjoyed rapid economic growth since World War II. Economically and socially, large status differences exist among various ethnic and religious groups (for example, between the Kurds and Arabs, Jews and Muslims) and between rich and poor classes. Religions vary from complete paganism to Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Although Arabic is the dominant language in the Middle East, there are many regions where languages other than Arabic dominate, from Nubian in the extreme north and Beja in the Red Sea hills to the many central African languages of the south.



7TH GROUP  
LATIN AMERICA

---

MORE ABOUT  
EACH GROUP'S AO

---

**7th Group: Latin America**

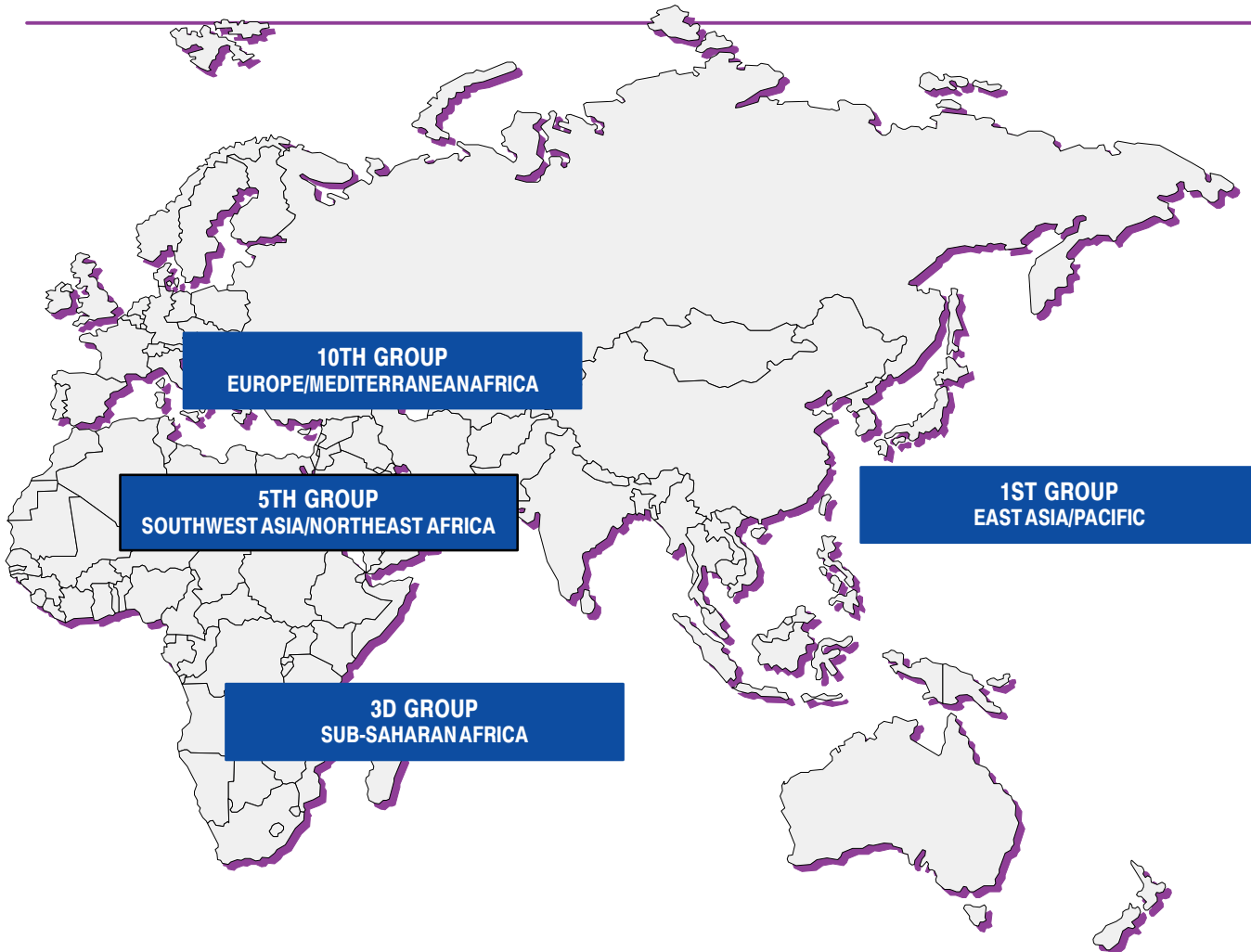
7th Group's AO covers all countries in Central and South America, including Panama, Honduras, Colombia, and Brazil, to name a few. The climate in most of these countries is characterized by extreme heat and humidity, while some South American countries experience cool winters and dry, pleasant summers. Geography varies from coastal deserts to expansive plains, marshes, and swamplands to some of the world's densest tropical rain forests. Living conditions are generally primitive in rural areas, and culturally, the pace of life is much slower than in the United States. The dominant religion is Catholicism, although in many areas pagan deities are worshipped. Spanish is the official language in every country except Brazil, where Portuguese is spoken, and the Guianas, where English, French, and Dutch are spoken. The majority of Central and South Americans do not speak English.

---

**10th Group: Europe/Mediterranean Africa**

10th Group's AO covers countries in Eastern and Western Europe, including Germany, Turkey, the Czech Republic, and the former Soviet Union. Climate and topography in these countries vary greatly, from heat and desert (for example, in Turkey) to extreme cold and mountainous areas (for example, in Denmark and Siberia). The living conditions in many of the Western European countries are similar to those found in the United States. However, the living conditions in Eastern European countries are generally poor. Basic necessities such as food, clean drinking water, and heat are not available or are very scarce in Eastern European countries, and sickness and malnutrition are common. Cultures vary among the many European countries, and ethnic differences are a source of great strife among neighboring peoples (for example, in Bosnia). Over 20 languages are spoken in Europe, although many Western Europeans understand English. Religious variation in Europe is great. However, most of the religions follow the traditions of Christianity.

---



# What You Can Expect After You're Qualified

Each of the five SF Groups is composed of three battalions and a Group support company (which includes Group headquarters). Each of the SF battalions is composed of three line companies (A, B, and C), as well as a support company and a battalion headquarters detachment. Each of the three line companies is composed of six SFODAs and one company headquarters.

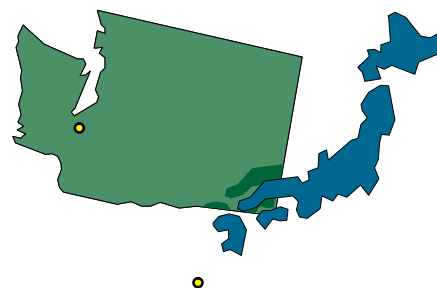
## MORE ABOUT

## DUTY STATIONS

### 1st Group

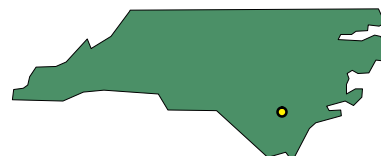
Most of 1st Group is located at Fort Lewis, Washington. Two SF battalions and the 1st Group Headquarters are stationed at this large post. Fort Lewis is also home to the 2/75th Ranger Battalion and the 9th Infantry Division. The post is just minutes south of the town of Tacoma and about 50 miles from Seattle. The cost of living in the area is moderate.

The 1st Battalion of the 1st Group is stationed at Okinawa, the southernmost island of Japan. This small island is also the home of a large U.S. Marine Corps contingent. The cost of living in Okinawa is moderate to high. The climate resembles that found in the midwestern United States, with cold winters and warm summers.



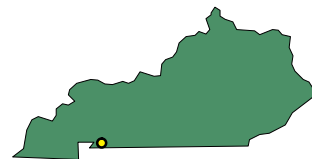
### 3d Group

All of 3d Group is located at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Fort Bragg is also the home of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Headquarters and the USAJFKSWCS. The 7th SF Group is located here as is the 82d Airborne Division. The Fort is one of the largest in the world. It is located next to the town of Fayetteville and is about 50 minutes from Raleigh. The cost of living is low. The climate is mild, with a short winter and a long warm summer.



### 5th Group

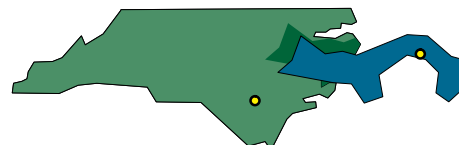
All of 5th Group is located at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Fort Campbell is also the home of the 101st Airborne Division (air assault) and Special Operations Aviation. The Fort is located outside of Clarksville, Tennessee, with the Kentucky and Tennessee state lines bisecting it. Nashville is about 45 minutes away. The area around the post has a low cost of living and a full range of seasonal climates.



### 7th Group

Most of 7th Group is stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (See 3d Group).

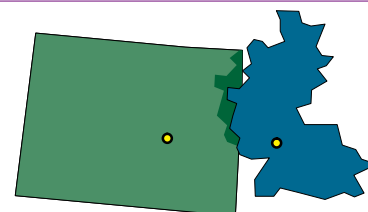
One Company of 7th Group is located at Fort Clayton, Panama. This Fort is located on the Pacific side of the small nation of Panama. The area has a low cost of living and a tropical climate.



### 10th Group

Most of the 10th Group is located at Fort Carson, Colorado. Fort Carson is the home of the 4th Infantry Division and is located close to Colorado Springs in the Rocky Mountains. The climate is cool, and the cost of living is moderate.

The 1st Battalion is stationed in Stuttgart, Germany. Stuttgart is located in the southern part of Germany. The climate is cool, and the cost of living is moderately high.



---

## MORE ABOUT

### MISSIONS AND SF GROUPS

---

In addition to the seven primary missions, SF soldiers perform collateral activities, such as security assistance, humanitarian assistance, coalition liaison, counterdrug activities, personnel recovery, and countermine activities.

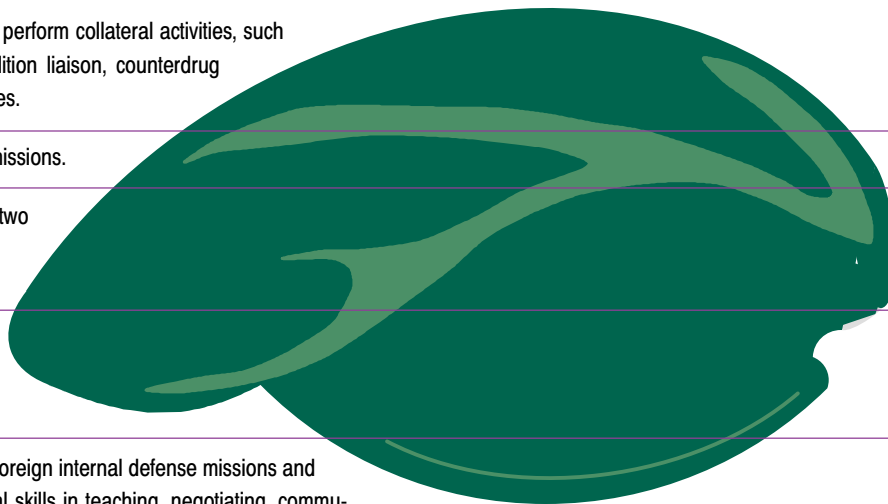
Every SF Group is capable of performing all types of missions.

At any given time, a Group may be focusing on one or two mission types. However, the missions for a Group can quickly change as world events change.

Even within a Group, missions vary. Teams sometimes specialize in one or two mission types, depending on their particular skills.

Currently, SF soldiers are most commonly involved in foreign internal defense missions and humanitarian activities. These missions require special skills in teaching, negotiating, communication, and interpersonal skills, as well as technical skills.

---



### Training

Expect to participate in training events both in the continental United States and outside the continental United States. The following are characteristics of typical team training:

- Time spent in close quarters with other team members.
- Much preparation time involving study, research, and planning.
- Harsh, uncomfortable living conditions, isolated from the world.
- Fast-paced activities, with little opportunity for sleep or relaxation.

In terms of individual training, the typical SF soldier has considerable opportunities compared to soldiers in other branches. Advanced specialized training is available for specific mission profiles; for example, SCUBA (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) and HALO (high-altitude low-opening) training.

### In-Garrison Activities

Work in garrison varies in type and intensity, depending upon the previous and upcoming training assignments and missions. Generally, SF soldiers are either planning or preparing for deployment or are deployed. Although they need to be ready to deploy at a moment's notice, they always have a long-range training plan that they follow. Garrison work often has the following characteristics:

- Slower, more flexible pace than when deployed.
- Emphasis on quality time with family and taking care of needed family or personal business.
- Emphasis on training or preparing for the next deployment or training exercise, performing tasks such as —
  - Maintaining equipment.



ADVICE FROM  
SF SOLDIERS

---

*“If married, make it  
a family decision.”*

---

- Training fellow team members in MOS skills (cross training).
- Preparing and researching lesson plans for teaching missions.
- Physical training.
- Language training.
- Rehearsals to practice team combat skills in accordance with standing operating procedures.

## Amount of Time Away From Home

The time spent away from home varies greatly from soldier to soldier and from year to year. The amount of deployment time for a given soldier will depend on his —

- SF Group, its AO, and national priorities regarding that part of the world.
- A Team and its specialty, if it has one (for example, SCUBA).
- MOS (shortage MOS may deploy more often).
- Individual schooling requirements.
- SF Group commander.

For the soldier assigned to an SFODA, time away from home in a given year can vary from about 1 week to 6 months, depending on the factors already noted. Deployment is considered TDY, so any one deployment can potentially be 179 days (6 months), but no longer. The average length of deployment is closer to 1 or 2 months.



### *Woman to Woman*

*“In SF, we’re all in this together. You don’t have to go it alone when your husband is deployed.”*



## WONDERING ABOUT DEPLOYMENTS AND TIME AWAY FROM H · O · M · E

*No one can tell you with certainty how often you will be deployed; time away from home varies.*

*The length of any one deployment can range from about 1 week to 179 days.*

*Soldiers usually know well in advance about scheduled deployments. However, sometimes there are unscheduled deployments with no advance warning.*

*Some SF soldiers experience long and frequent separations from their families.*

*Soldiers sometimes deploy individually, as well as with their team or with larger-size units.*



## W O N D E R I N G   A B O U T P R O M O T I O N S

*Promotion rates in SF are among the best in the Army for both officers and NCOs. Given the changes currently taking place in the Army, these promotion rates may also be changing. Moreover, the performance of SF soldiers tends to be relatively high. So, soldiers who get promoted in SF are consistently high performers.*

*Another career path that some SF soldiers choose is that leading to the drill sergeant, recruiting duty, and WO program. SF offers an excellent opportunity for an NCO to become a WO.*



# The Long-Term View of Your SF Career

As a rule, an SFQC graduate's initial assignment will be to an SFODA. During this period he will enhance his professional development by working with seasoned professionals on a variety of missions in the Group's targeted region of the world.

## Promotion Rates

Typically, sergeants are promoted to SSGs as soon as they meet minimum time-in-grade standards and if they perform well. SSGs normally find themselves in a promotable status toward the end of their initial 4-year SF tour. Promotable SSGs will attend the Advanced NCO Course around their ninth year of Army service. Promotions are consistent with the conventional Army, but on occasion there are accelerated promotions.

It is possible for some NCOs to go to the Defense Language Institute or to attend SF medical cross-training after serving 2 years in a Group. These soldiers will return to their Groups to employ their new skills on an SFODA after successfully completing training.

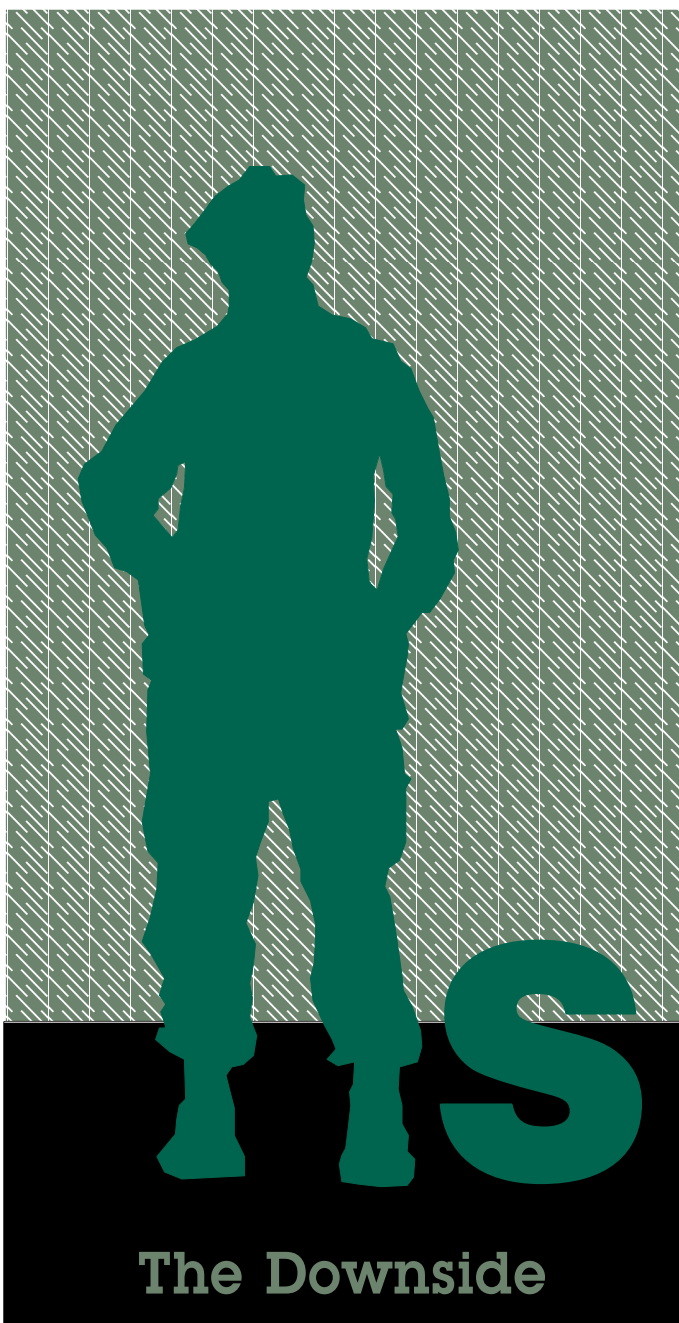
After a soldier has acquired about 4 years of experience to round out his SF training, he may be assigned away from an operational Group to serve as an instructor at the USAJFKSWCS or to serve in a specialized position that draws on his regional experience. During this period, the soldier broadens his knowledge of how the Army works and gains an understanding of the work that goes into developing and sustaining a special operations force.

Soldiers who perform exceptionally well in both the operational and support environment will find themselves returning to an operational Group to assume responsibilities as the senior NCO of an SFODA. The next step is selection as team sergeant, a critical opportunity in an SF NCO's career, since the team sergeant is instrumental in preparing his SFODA to execute missions and is charged with developing his young NCOs into outstanding SF soldiers. After 1 to 3 years of team sergeant time, an NCO may be selected to serve in key special operations positions throughout the world.

Master sergeants with outstanding files may be selected to attend the Sergeants Major Academy. Graduates from the Academy will be assigned to positions of significant responsibility throughout the world pending selection for promotion to sergeant major (SGM). Duty positions for SGMs are designed to shape policy for the future of SF or to enforce the high standards associated with a career in special operations.

## Job Satisfaction

SF soldiers report that the camaraderie, professionalism, and overall job satisfaction are unmatched by any other job in the Army. On the other hand, some soldiers report that they expected to travel more, train more, and conduct more real-world missions than they have thus far.



**REPORTED BY SF SOLDIERS**

- Time spent away from home and family.
- Difficulties in training people from other cultures.
- Low standards of living in some countries where SF teams operate.

- Camaraderie, sense of community.
- Professionalism of fellow SF soldiers.
- Less formal authority exerted by superiors and high mutual respect.
- High levels of responsibility and self-discipline.
- Experience with other cultures.



---

ADVICE FROM  
SF SOLDIERS

---

*“First, get your family situation in order.  
Second, be prepared for more responsibility and accountability.  
Third, be aware that you will be in a more risky environment.  
Fourth, be aware that your main job will be to train in foreign countries.  
Fifth, be aware that you will have better chances at promotions.”*

---

## Families in SF

In SF as elsewhere, families and individuals are unique. However, SF families appear to share certain characteristics. Many families characterize themselves as independent and self-sufficient. Balanced with this is a strong sense of community with other SF families.

Wives of SF soldiers describe themselves as —

- Independent
- Self-sufficient
- Flexible
- Strong
- A “jack of all trades”
- Supportive of their husband’s work
- Having outside interests
- Outgoing

### Common Issues for Families in SF

The total number of times an SF soldier is away from home in one year may be the same or even less than the number of times he would be away from home in a conventional combat arms unit. However, most SF families report that the length of time the soldier is away at one time is an issue with which they must contend. The SF soldier may be gone for several weeks or months at a time when he is deployed for training, missions, or away at schools. Time away tends to be greater for soldiers who are on an SFODA than for soldiers with other assignments.

Most deployments are planned well in advance, and families are given the soldier’s location and address. However, there are rare times when the soldier deploys unexpectedly or is not able to disclose his exact location. The family may be unable to call him directly during these situations. The unpredictability of such deployments can cause stress for the family because they are unable to plan for his absence, and they are sometimes unable to plan on his exact return date.

The time the soldier is away can be particularly stressful for families with children. The wife typically must assume all the home responsibilities when her husband is away, including child care, household finances, and household upkeep. Keeping the children’s relationship with their father secure and ongoing is another challenge when the father is away for long periods.

The transition time when the soldier is leaving and returning from deployments can also be stressful and emotional for both husband and wife. Many wives settle into new routines when the husband is away and must then readjust these routines when he returns. On the other hand, some husbands and wives report a positive outcome when the husband returns from deployments because they experience a repeated honeymoon period.

Some wives report that they’ve had to adjust to the realization that their husbands truly love their jobs and are committed to their team and its missions. Some wives find it disconcerting that their husband spends so much time with his team, even when the team is not deployed. On the other hand, many wives spend a great deal

of time socializing with the other wives on the team, so that the team's closeness is a positive factor for everyone in the family.

Common family stresses in SF are the —

- Length of time the soldier is away.
- Number of times the soldier is away, especially when he is on an SFODA.
- Loneliness due to separations.
- Difficulties of communication, due to soldier's schedule.
- Difficulties maintaining relationships between father and young children.
- Transition times of leaving and returning and disruptions of routines.
- Inability to plan family vacations or activities when unscheduled deployments arise.
- Difficulties of maintaining household finances.

## Family Support Mechanisms

SF have been in the forefront of the Army with respect to support for families. They were one of the first to develop family support groups that schedule get-togethers for wives and families, both when the husband is away and when he is in garrison. The purpose of the family support group is to help families, especially wives, build support networks.

When the soldier begins the SFQC, the company will introduce the wives to the family support group. The meetings, which are open to all, provide opportunities to discuss issues and share information. Each SF Group also has its own family support group. Plus, there are many other formal and informal sources of support for SF families. A family member in SF never needs to feel alone.

Sources of support for SF families include —

- Family support groups.
- Close, supportive relationships among team members and their wives (the team is often described as a "second family").
- "Chain of concern" rosters used to pass along information and assistance.
- Chaplain's office and family support centers on post.



### *Woman to Woman*

*"Make sure your goals and your husband's goals are consistent and that they are realistic. Make sure communication between you is excellent, not just good."*



- Family information briefings before major deployments.
- Phone “hot lines” that are used when soldiers are deployed unexpectedly to provide information about the soldier’s whereabouts and scheduled return.

## Family Satisfaction in SF

Most wives report that they are proud of their husband and his work. Most also report satisfaction in knowing that their husband experiences a great deal of job satisfaction in SF, more than he would in any other job. The independence that most wives experience out of necessity is often seen as a plus. SF wives report becoming stronger and more self-sufficient. The SF community can also be a source of satisfaction for families, because they feel a true bond with other SF families.



### *Woman to Woman*

*“Go for it! It’s the best thing that could happen to your husband, and you will be proud of him.”*



## Contacts for More Information

### E N L I S T E D

*Special Forces In-Service Recruiting Commander  
U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School  
DSN 239-1818  
Commercial (910) 432-1637*

### O F F I C E R S

*Special Forces Recruiter*

*Fort Bragg:  
DSN 239-1818  
Commercial (910) 432-1818*

*Fort Campbell:  
DSN 635-9818  
Commercial (502) 439-4390*

*Fort Lewis:  
DSN 357-8710  
Commercial (206) 964-1001*

*or*

*Special Forces Future Readiness Officer  
U.S. Total Army Personnel Command  
DSN 221-3178  
Commercial (703) 325-3178*



# **SPECIAL FORCES**